



2021 UMN Forever Green Kernza®

Grower Vetting & Licensing Priorities in MN & the Upper Midwest

TLI and UMN FGI will continue to play key institutional roles in vetting and licensing new Kernza growers in 2021. TLI and UMN Forever Green will increasingly vet new acreage in the context of advancing broader social, economic, and environmental goals of Kernza in the region.

UMN and TLI will also actively develop a governance structure in partnership with Kernza stakeholders to responsibly shepherd and scale the Kernza enterprise moving forward. Our hope is that by 2022 or soon thereafter, Kernza stakeholders will have developed adequate capacity to effectively govern this process, with UMN and TLI playing long-term institutional support roles.

New Kernza grower applications will be considered in 2021. Similar to previous years, a conservative and strategic approach will be taken to licensing new Kernza acreage so as to sustainably scale supply with demand, and to maximize the chances of grower success of early adopters on the farm and in the market. Priorities for new Kernza growers will remain largely unchanged from 2020, and strengthened in terms of collaborating with early market partners. The 2021 vetting and licensing priorities for the region include the following:

- **Prospective growers should be able to show collaboration or contracts with, for example, the emerging Kernza producer cooperative or other buyers.** Growers not meeting this term are unlikely to be licensed in 2021.
- **Minimum planting scale:** New growers must plant a minimum acreage to ensure Kernza will be a production priority, and to achieve supply chain efficiencies. The minimum acreage that will be licensed is 20 acres, with ideal plantings of 40 acres or more.
- **Herbicide, pesticide, fungicide-free production:** No agricultural chemical applications are yet registered for use on IWG for human consumption. Trials are currently underway to approve the use of selected applications. Note: Nitrogen fertilizers are allowed.
- **Registration and compliance with TLI's Kernza® trademark program:** Growers not enrolled in or adhering to the Kernza trademark standards will not be able to market their product as Kernza, and will not be approved to purchase seed.
- **Grower commitment to marketing their harvest, either in partnership with producer groups or market partners.** UMN FGI and TLI are not grain buyers and are not obligated to purchase or market your harvest.
- **Minnesota growers will receive priority** based on early investment from the State of Minnesota, and to advance UMN FGI's mission to develop new crops and crop enterprises for MN growers and rural communities. Non-MN plantings will be considered following the top geographic priorities described here.
- **Preference for production on MN wellhead protection areas, Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs), or vulnerable/impaired watersheds:** Research shows strong water quality benefits of Kernza, including steep reductions in nitrate leaching. UMN FGI prioritizes new Kernza plantings where it will maximize environmental benefits, such as on wellhead protection areas and/or DWSMAS. To see whether your farm on a DWSMA, see here: <http://bit.ly/MN-DWSMA-map>
- **Preference for growers in SE, SW, and Central MN.** A "cluster" strategy is important for targeting and concentrating

environmental benefits, achieving economic efficiencies, facilitating grower cooperation and public engagement, and leveraging additional resources. Initial investment from the State of MN has prioritized these areas as 'Economic and Environmental Clusters of Opportunity,' or EECOs. The areas below have been identified as priority regions in MN for Kernza production based on early successes, economic potential, and environmental vulnerability. The counties included are listed in the sidebar.

Support via the MN Clean Water Legacy Fund will de-risk grower adoption of Kernza in these areas via the Forever Green EECO Implementation Program, which includes a combination of ecosystem service payments, economic risk mitigation payments, and technical assistance for growers. This program will be launching in February 2021. Growers in these regions will hear more in early February.

- **Preference for growers experience that will maximize their chance of success with Kernza, including:**
 - **Growing other small grains or forage grass seeds** such as wheat, barley, oats, rye, intermediate wheatgrass, etc.
 - **Organic management practices.** No herbicides or pesticides are labeled for IWG.
 - **Selling into food grade markets.** Producing crops for human consumption is a premium market with high standards. Growers may need to hold their harvest on-farm for several months, and need to have a plan for marketing their crop.
 - **Adequate planting and harvest equipment, on-farm post-harvest storage, and grain drying capacity.**
- **Preference for dual-use grain and forage production:** IWG produces high-value hay and a large quantity of marketable straw. Multiple cuttings per year can be taken without impacting grain yield and quality. Dual-use management can be critical to grower profitability. Growers who are able to take hay and/or straw cuttings to use as forage in their own operation or to sell into local markets will receive priority.
- **Commitment to review and use available technical assistance (TA) resources, understanding that TA support for this crop is still limited.** Current web-based resources include the following:
 - A IWG/Kernza Dual-Use Management Guide: <http://bit.ly/Kernza-Grower-Guide>.
 - Recorded presentations of agronomic experts and other resources for growerst <http://bit.ly/Kernza-Grower-Resources>.
 - The UMN Forever Green Youtube Kernza playlist: <http://bit.ly/UMNFGI-Kernza-video-playlist>
 - The 2020 Kernza Meeting: <http://bit.ly/2020-Kernza-Meeting>

UMN and TLI reserve some discretion to license select plantings outside the boundaries of these exact priorities for 'uniquely aligned opportunities' that will advance the Kernza enterprise.

Overall, these licensing priorities combined suggest that new **Kernza growers in 2021 will continue to be innovative, risk-tolerant early-adopter growers** that are uniquely positioned to succeed with this innovative perennial grain crop while advancing broader goals of social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

Counties Included:

- **Southeast EECO:** Dakota, Goodhue, Wabasha, Winona, Houston, Fillmore, Olmsted, Mower, Freeborn, Waseca, Steele, Dodge, Rice, Le Seur, or Nicollet Counties
- **Southwest EECO:** Nobles, Murray, Lyon, Rock, Pipestone, Lincoln, Yellow Medicine, Lac qui Parle, or Big Stone Counties
- **Central EECO:** Stearns, Todd, Wadena, Hubbard, Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Benton, Sherburne, Mille Lacs, or Isanti Counties

Questions about 2021 Kernza Grower Vetting and Licensing?

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